

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Beijing+25 Review Ministerial

U.S. Statement for Plenary Session, November 27, 2019

Delivered by: Amanda Van Dort, Senior Advisor, Department of State

Good afternoon. It is an honor to be here today to review the progress made on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action over the last 25 years. I would like to thank UNESCAP for hosting this important dialogue.

For the United States, advancing gender equality is a key component of all three pillars – economic, governance, and security – of our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative prioritizes inclusive participation by women and girls in policy- and government-decision making, as well as support for emerging leaders among youth, women, and vulnerable groups. It encompasses over \$600 million across more than 200 programs in the Indo-Pacific since the beginning of the Trump Administration. At the East Asia Summit this month, we announced an additional \$68 million for new programs as well as the formation of the new Indo-Pacific Transparency Fund.

While economic growth in East Asia and the Pacific have reduced gender gaps in health and education, more must be done to achieve gender parity in the labor markets and political arena. We must increase our efforts to address gender-based violence – recognizing that refugees and other displaced persons, as well as ethnic minorities are often deliberately targeted in conflict and crisis. Over 60 percent of the world’s youth live in the East Asia and the Pacific; this offers critical opportunities for promoting girls’ empowerment.

The United States promotes women’s economic empowerment through the U.S. Women’s Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP). W-GDP is the first-ever whole-of-government approach to advancing global women’s economic empowerment, and was launched earlier this year. The Initiative seeks to reach 50 million women in the developing world by 2025. A new innovative fund at the U.S. Agency for International Development will provide an initial \$100 million allocation. W-GDP focuses on three key pillars: supporting workforce development and skills training; helping women entrepreneurs gain access to markets, capital, and networks; and working to change laws, regulations, and norms that limit women’s ability to fully participate in the economy. We know that when women are empowered economically, they

reinvest in their families and communities, which spurs economic growth and promotes more peaceful societies.

Supporting women's leadership starts with empowering girls and addressing the barriers they face, including through the Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative's prioritization of youth and emerging leader development. The United States supports Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Design, and Mathematics camps, online anti-GBV activities, and efforts to engage men and boys in support of enabling opportunities for girls to have sustainable livelihoods in the future.

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV) is a cornerstone of the U.S. government's commitment to advancing human rights. Gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be achieved without addressing GBV and its root causes. The U.S. government supports the Voices Against Violence Initiative, a public-private partnership which addresses GBV through trainings, support to local organizations, and emergency assistance to individuals facing extreme threats of violence.

The United States believes that women should have equal access to health care. We are proud to be a leader in women's and maternal health, and recognize that each nation has the sovereign right to implement related programs and activities consistent with their laws and policies. Consistent with the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its report, we support the principle of voluntary and informed family planning, and do not recognize abortion as a method of family planning.

I am delighted to report that in June, the United States launched a Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) –to implement the U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017. The first legislation of its kind anywhere in the world, the Act and its corresponding Strategy focuses on supporting women's meaningful participation and leadership in promoting lasting peace and stability, ensuring women and girl's safety, and increasing the capacity of the United States and partner governments to support sustainable WPS efforts.

In conclusion, tremendous progress has been made over the past 25 years towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific, but we have more work to do. The United States is pleased to reaffirm our commitment to working with our partners in the

UNCLASSIFIED

region to empower women and girls, which is key to increasing global stability, achieving sustainable development, and ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific. Thank you.

UNCLASSIFIED